School Testing Program Options

February 22, 2022

Where is Public Health on contact tracing?

While Public Health is transitioning away from ***universal*** contact tracing at this point in the COVID-19 pandemic, ***targeted*** contact tracing in settings like schools **is effective** at preventing transmission and should be continued to enable students and staff to safely remain in school.

Moreover, Public Health **continues to support schools** and **quarantine and isolation measures** to prevent transmission of SARS-CoV-2.

What are the options for contact tracing in schools participating in a testing program?

Testing Program Option 1: Maintain Test to Stay/Test to Play (active contact tracing).

School districts can choose to **actively** identify susceptible close contacts in school settings and enroll close contacts in Test to Stay program which allows them to attend in-person during their quarantine period.

Testing Cadence Options

Option 1 Testing Cadence Options:

Option A: Test susceptible close contacts upon notification of their exposure and then every other day through day 7:

- Using a **rapid antigen** test (minimum of 3 tests with at least one test occurring on day 5 or later) **OR**
- Using a **rapid PCR** test (minimum of 2 tests with at least one test occurring on day 5 or later).

Option B: Test susceptible close contacts upon notification of their exposure and then one additional time between Days 5 and 7 after exposure.

Testing Program Options Pros and Cons

Testing Program Option 1 (Active contact tracing) :

Pros: By **actively identifying people** who are exposed and enrolling them into a testing strategy, schools will identify cases faster and limit exposures and transmission within schools.

Cons: Actively identifying susceptible close contacts is **resource intensive** because it takes an evaluation of mask usage, physical distance between case and contacts, susceptibility based on vaccination/recent disease status, and other considerations like whether it was a high-risk activity.

What are the options for contact tracing in schools participating in a testing program?

Testing Program Option 2: Maintain Test to Stay/Test to Play (passive contact tracing).

School districts can choose to **passively** identify close contacts in school settings and enroll the close contacts in a Test to Stay program which allows them to attend in-person during their quarantine period.

Rather than evaluating mask usage, physical distance between cases and contacts, susceptibility based on vaccination status, and high-risk activities, **everyone in a classroom or activity is enrolled** regardless of whether they are considered a CLOSE contact and regardless of susceptibility.

Testing Cadence Options

Option 2 Testing Cadence Options:

Option A: Test susceptible close contacts upon notification of their exposure and then every other day through day 7:

- Using a **rapid antigen** test (minimum of 3 tests with at least one test occurring on day 5 or later) **OR**
- Using a **rapid PCR** test (minimum of 2 tests with at least one test occurring on day 5 or later).

Option B: Test susceptible close contacts upon notification of their exposure and then one additional time between Days 5 and 7 after exposure.

Testing Program Options Pros and Cons

Testing Program Option 2 (Passive contact tracing) :

Pros: Less resource intensive because you do not have to identify specific susceptible close contacts but are rather casting a wider net to anyone potentially exposed. **This options still allows attending in-person school during quarantine**.

Cons: Time saved by not having to identify specific susceptible close contacts is offset by increased number of people who would need testing; this option is **not likely to work in junior and high school settings** where students change classrooms multiple times a day. This option also uses **more testing supplies** that the targeted approach in Option 1.

What are the options for contact tracing in schools participating in a testing program?

Option 3 Test to Know diagnostic testing only (susceptible close contacts CANNOT attend in-person during home quarantine):

Schools can choose to conduct **diagnostic testing** to support students/teachers/staff who become symptomatic during the school day and/or for students/teachers/staff that call and notify the school that they are symptomatic.

Antigen testing for return from isolation: test students/teachers/staff coming back from 5 days of home isolation. This can be a one-time test on the morning of return to school with option to test again following morning.

Antigen or PCR testing for return from quarantine: test students/teachers/staff coming back from 5 days of home quarantine. This can be a one-time test on the morning of return to school with option to test more often.

Testing Cadence Options

Option 3 Testing Cadence Options:

- Test **symptomatic** students/teachers/staff on an **as-needed** basis.
- Test students/teachers/staff who had COVID-19 and have **completed at least 5 days of home isolation.** Test on the morning of Day 6 prior to attending school if the result is negative. Consider testing again on the morning of Day 7 prior to attending school.
- Test students/teachers/staff who were exposed to COVID-19 and have **completed at least 5 days of home quarantine.** Test on the morning of Day 6 prior to attending school. Consider testing again on morning of Day 7 prior to attending school.

Testing Program Options Pros and Cons

Testing Program Option 3 (Diagnostic testing) :

Pros:

- Having testing staff and supplies on site at schools still enables schools to **identify cases faster** than not having the testing infrastructure in place; this can **reduce exposure and transmission** within schools.
- Testing people returning from 5 days of home isolation will **identify people** who are potentially still infectious and need to continue quarantine at home. Testing people returning from 5 days of home quarantine will **identify people** who develop COVID-19 and need to isolate at home.

Cons: Lost in-person school days due to home quarantine. Also, if no one is notifying close contacts of an exposure, most susceptible close contacts will likely continue coming to school and the **risk of transmission** in schools increases.